

Epiphany

by mississippimudpiecraves

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Epiphany

A/N: This was requested by a guest reviewer months ago. I don't even know if the person is following my stories anymore but I still had to give this a try. Sorry I forgot about specific details such as Jiraiya being alive and Shikaku and Asuma kidnapping Shikamaru. I was 3/4 done when I realized I forgot that. Haha.

>I am not so sure about this one so I would appreciate some feedback please.<p>Seven women clad in various forms of outrageously gaudy lingerie-like uniforms were gyrating all over the dance floor. More than several have made their way over to him, swaying seductively and giving him come-hither eyes. Assorted colored spotlights littered all over the area, giving him a slight headache.<p>

His friends were displaying various degrees of expressions. Chouji wore an anxious look, his eyes flitting about the room, touching on the girls then rapidly ripping away. Naruto was in constant laughter, clearly enjoying himself. In his vicinity, Kiba was hooting by intervals and playfully reaching out towards the girls, actively interacting with them. Sai had on his signature pleasantly blank smile. Shino was merely watching with an inscrutable face along with Sasuke who could rival his expression. Lee was randomly shouting "How youthful!"

And he was smack dab in the center of it all. Keeping from falling asleep. Maintaining a carefully bored look. Why?

Apparently his friends insisted on throwing him a bachelor party which was something he really did not care for.

He just wanted to lay in bed with his gorgeous fiancÃ©e. Inhaling her scent. Touching her soft skin. Hearing her low chuckles. Drowning in

her teal eyes. And none of those maudlin phrases were ever going to escape his mouth.

Not wanting to be rude to his friends, he agreed to let them arrange the party. Knowing all the while that his friends were the ones who would receive the greater benefit from it. And that was perfectly fine with him.

"Come on, Shikamaru, you're surrounded by all these sexy women. You could try to look more energetic, you know," Naruto cheekily said, clamping his left hand down Shikamaru's right shoulder.

"Careful there, Naruto. Someone might tell Hinata you're enjoying this just a bit too much," Shikamaru deadpanned.

"Nah, I've been good. Ain't touched any of them! Not unless looking is forbidden too?" Naruto asked with a sly smile. "Besides, Hinata knows she's got nothing to worry about. Right, Sai?"

"She only has to worry about your tinyâ€" Sai said with a grin as Naruto facepalmed and Shikamaru snickered softly.

Kiba suddenly interrupted, "Hey hey it's time, Shikamaru! Take your pick!" He had a shit-eating grin on his face that made Shikamaru a bit apprehensive.

"What're you talking about?" The lazy genius raised a brow.

Chouji, who was seated to his left, quietly spoke for the first time in a while, "I think he means you have to pick one of the girls, Shika."

"What for?" His forehead scrunched in puzzlement.

Naruto and Kiba shouted simultaneously, "Lap dance!" Then they high-fived each other, shooting Shikamaru wicked looks.

"Take your pick within five minutes. They'll continue to dance and you can take that time to choose," Kiba explained gleefully, rubbing his hands in anticipation.

"What if I don't wanna?"

Boos and groans of protest were flung at him. Even Shino and Sasuke were giving him unnerving stares. That was just completely unsettling. One would think those two would not give a fig about this whatsoever. Pssh, they probably just wanted to see him suffer. Typical.

"If you don't choose, we'll make sure to pick the worst, or should I say best, of the lot for you," Naruto said evilly, exchanging a meaningful look with the other guys.

Shikamaru sighed heavily. "Troublesome."

Sniggers were heard from the guys, knowing he had conceded. Except one. Chouji was starting to look pale and sweaty, not unlike the last time he missed his daily snack due to a situation that bothered him deeply. And those kinds of situations were few and far in between. Curious.

Was it only due to the fact that Chouji was not used to this kind of scene?

So while he kept an eye out for the tamest girl among the bunch, he carefully watched his best friend too in case he started hyperventilating. This proved to be a bit of a task since he was barely paying any attention to the girls earlier.

Hold on a second. It was not obvious earlier but Chouji was definitely watching a girl in particular.

A willowy brunette with an average-sized bosom who actually was not all that spectacular compared to the others but had her own appeal. Her chosen outfit covered more skin compared to the other girls. In truth, her dancing lacked a bit of grace and her face did not seem at all into it and implied she would rather be elsewhere.

But the look in Chouji's eyes and his shaking hands did not indicate interest but rather of anxiety?

The lazy genius's mental clogs started turning while he watched the two figures who caught his interest. Until it clicked.

Leaning close to his best friend, he whispered something to Chouji which made his eyes widen. After a few seconds, his best friend gave a small nod. And he could swear he could see Chouji's shoulders relax as if the weight of the world fell right off.

"Time to choose, Shikamaru!"

"Yah, I choose her." He pointed at the brunette whose body visibly stiffened.

The other guys were a bit startled at his quick pick, predicting that Shikamaru would have hemmed and hawed quite a bit before finally making his choice since he seemed so adamantly against it earlier.

"Well, that was fast! What made you pick her?" Naruto asked, eyeing Shikamaru curiously.

"Who cares? She's hot," Kiba leered.

Pointedly ignoring Kiba, Shikamaru shrugged. "Seemed like the least troublesome one."

They all guffawed except for Chouji who choked. Lee pounded his back enthusiastically.

With a neutral expression, the brunette silently walked over to an empty chair in the middle of the dance floor and waited for Shikamaru to sit on it.

He kept a disgruntled look on his face as he dragged himself to that chair. The guys were giving shouts of encouragement.

"Go Shikamaru!"

"Look alive, man!"

"Live for youth!"

"Spank that ass!"

He fought to keep the embarrassment from erupting on his face, having a sudden, fleeting urge to disown his friends.

As he slouched on the seat, the notes of a slow, sultry saxophone played throughout the room.

His eyes lingered on hers as she started to sway to the music.

Now that the spotlight was on her, her dancing became more graceful than what he observed previously. She became simply alluring as if some ancient goddess granted her the gift of dance.

>While she was performing, she could not help but be drawn by the stare he held with her. It was an expression of utter boredom. But not once did his eyes veer away. It was as if under that mask of boredom, he was in fact egging her on.<p>

To impress him? She did not know why but something compelled her to rise to the challenge and strip that veneer of ennui.

Her moves became more pronounced and precise. Every muscle in her body up to the tips of her fingers dedicated to put him under her spell. Every sensuous brush of skin was carefully calculated.

The guys hooted and hollered throughout the whole dance. But they were both consumed by the intense stares between them to even notice all the ruckus.

When the last note of the song faded, Shikamaru rose before the brunette moved away and whispered to her, "You were amazing. Meet me in the side alley in about thirty minutes?"

The brunette momentarily appeared shocked, then hesitant before nodding curtly. And she turned away sharply and walked off in long, clipped strides. But not before he caught her eyes becoming suspiciously bright.

He turned back to his friends and ordered them several rounds of sake. The plan was to make sure that they were all sufficiently drunk before he slipped away, avoiding Chouji's curious look.

As he went out into the side alley, he spotted her right away with her rigid back to him. She swung around to face him warily as the door shut. Her arms were crossed over her chest as if they served as some sort of barrier. Her eyes were frigid as the winter snow.

"What do you want?" she asked bluntly. The tone and words did not befit someone of her occupation and definitely posed a completely different person from the performer.

He casually leaned back against the wall and stuffed his hands into his pockets. "What do you think?" he asked sarcastically. "How much?"

The look of outrage was evident on her face as her arms fell by her sides. "Excuse me?"

His eyes narrowed as he abruptly pushed off the wall, advanced on her and pushed her to the wall. His arms caged her head in, barely a foot of space between their bodies. "You heard me. How much for a night?"

Her hands curled into fists as she shook with barely leashed rage. She slowly uttered with precision, "You. Have. A. Fianc  e."

"She doesn't need to be informed," he murmured as he bent his head and started to slide his lips down her neck.

How could he say that so casually? How could he so easily betray someone he swore a lifetime's fidelity to? All in exchange for a one-night stand? The pupils in her eyes darkened in a furious haze of red and a violent rush of noise filled her ears.

In a flash of a second, his back smacked against the opposite brick wall and he sank to the ground. He looked up to see an enraged woman heaving.

She roughly whispered as if she couldn't find it in herself to yell, "You fucking bastard."

He shrugged nonchalantly. "That's why I came to you. And don't tell me you don't want me too. You looked at me during that lap dance as if you wanted to devour me."

"Shut the hell up." This delivered in the same hushed but biting tone. Her fingers were flexing repeatedly and aggressively. She wanted to wring his neck.

"Why are you crying?" Shikamaru asked quietly.

She stilled and realized that, indeed, tears were falling down her cheeks. Hastily swiping the tears away as if they were an indignity, she spat, "You're despicable."

Slowly standing up and dusting off his clothes, his dark eyes bore into hers and replied evenly, "Is it truly despicable to lust after your own fianc  e?"

She froze for a second before sputtering, "How did you-?"

"Chouji."

"How did he-? Damn you, Ino," she muttered, feeling an utter fool.

"You've held up that chakra-masking jutsu and disguise jutsu long enough. Why not take it off now?" he suggested in a mild tone.

She shot him a hard look before a cloud of smoke engulfed her and eventually reappeared in her true form.

Temari, his one and only fianc  e, stood before him. She was only wearing a tank top and shorts. Her signature hairstyle was in place. There was an unreadable expression on her face. But he knew exactly how to break that down.

"Imagine my surprise when my fiancée who was supposed to be at home was actually in disguise at my own bachelor party. Makes me wonder if she isn't the only kunoichi in disguise in this party."

She winced.

"More importantly, it made me wonder if my fiancée actually didn't trust me enough to keep my hands to myself." There was a blank expression on his face but she knew better. He was far from pleased with her.

She bit her lip then spoke hurriedly, "You're mistaken. It's not that my trust in you has wavered, rather it's certain opportunistic hussies..." She trailed off, mumbling to herself. Her cheeks started heating up.

"Is that right?" He raised an eyebrow. His face looked completely unimpressed.

That look on his face put her on the defence. With passionately ablazed eyes, she blurted out, "No one has the right to touch you like I do, especially not those who are professionals at being sensual!"

Then she seemed to realize what she said and clamped her mouth shut. Her cheeks became hotter.

Never had she felt such a degree of humiliation before. She should have never listened to Ino's prattling or her own insecurities. The kunoichi in her could not in any way accept such a failing.

The kunoichi could not accept that it was a man who could reduce her to this. But her inner self argued vehemently it was not just any man. It was him.

This lazy ass, cry baby who somehow managed to worm his way into the strict confines of her heart. And who, in a matter of days, will vow to love, honor and obey her til death do them part.
>Her depth of love for him absolutely terrified the shit out of her. It was overwhelming to the point of suffocation. To the point that it could obscure her good judgement.<p>

She had already felt overwhelming insecurity during her father's reign. Not always being able to measure up to his standards was a constant worry and frustration during her childhood. It always ate at her that he could never give a single word of praise or acknowledgement in any endeavour that she attempted.

She had already felt overwhelming fear when her youngest sibling who housed a jinchuuriki went on indiscriminating and ruthless killing sprees. Kankuro and she always wondered if they were to be next just to slake his bloodlust urges. Thankfully, with the aid of Naruto's compassion, Gaara was able to have a complete change of heart and turned over a new leaf.

But this overwhelming emotion seemed to come from a whole other dimension. It was completely alien.

Because it required that she invests her entire being into a lifetime

commitment to a single man.

Her younger self would have rather gladly taken on an S-ranked mission instead.

Shikamaru took hold of her elbows and drew her close until he enclosed her in his warm embrace.

He had been observing what seemed to be a chaotic cycle of thoughts and emotions in her body language. And he had correctly guessed that it was related to wedding anxiety. And to be frank, he did not realize until this moment how frightened he was of possibly losing her. Not being able to touch her like this, not being able to just talk, not being able to just lay beside her, not being able to see her smile. It was one of the most palpable fears that actually got his lazy self all high-strung.

His younger self would have probably proclaimed his life would go back to being peaceful if he was left by his lonesome once more. No troublesome women to nag at him or tell him how to run his life. But now, it seemed like his definition of peaceful drastically changed. His previous definition would, he now knew, equate to nothing but dull emptiness. His current definition, well, seemed glaringly obvious by now.

"Second thoughts?" he whispered. There was a slight tremor in his voice.

"No!" was her immediate reply. Her eyes snapped up to his. There was wariness but also concern and worry. And fear? She realized that perhaps he, too, might have had the same mental processing.

Perhaps, even with his indolent nature, he might have spent some time agonizing and coming to terms with his own feelings for her and their imminent wedding.

And that, more than anything, gave her the peace she needed. All the bombarding, contradicting thoughts settled as everything came to a standstill. Just like a fierce hurricane eventually tapers off into a gentle breeze.

Because it takes two beings invested in each other to make a marriage work. And right now, in this moment, with their hearts in their eyes, she could believe in fairy tales.

Her hand came up to cup his cheek as she continued in a firm tone, "We've come too far to have second thoughts, don't you think?"

The stunning yet tremulous smile she sent his way was like a balm to his soul.

His hand covered hers that was on his cheek and nodded. His eyes were brimming with unshed tears. "It would be troublesome to stop all the wedding arrangements. Ino would kill us."

They both chuckled over that. Then as a tear finally spilled over, Temari placed her other hand as well on his other cheek as she rose up on her toes and captured that teardrop between her lips. Her lashes swept down her cheek as her eyes fell closed.

"Such a crybaby," she murmured teasingly, smiling against his cheek.

It still marvelled him that this fearsome kunoichi could have such a tender side to her. But that just reaffirmed how much he meant to her and it filled his chest with wondrous warmth. And he'll be damned if he screwed this up.

He tugged her body closer to him as she let out a startled 'oh!'. The length of his form pressed intimately against the length of hers, her bare feet having stepped on top of his shoes.

"...so much..." Shikamaru murmured into her neck.

Temari strained her ears to catch what he was saying.

Dragging his lips up until they rubbed against hers, he mumbled as if it was done subconsciously, "...want you so much, Tem..."

It was said carelessly, lazily but it still made her heart sing. And instantly lit her body afire.

Her hands hurriedly stole up, practically ripped away his hair tie and buried into his hair. She sighed deeply in satisfaction against his lips.

But then she said, "Dammit, it's not fair to make me want you right now."

"Huh, why not?" Though there was a silly grin on his face at that.

"Haven't you seen where we are?" She gestured at the dark little alley way they were in. "And there's no way I'm going back inside. I guess we could just head home-"

"No," he said with a sense of finality. He lightly urged her legs up to wrap around his waist.

"Are you serious? Right here?"

"I'm treating you like the finest treat that I can't wait to devour."

She chortled and he drew back, a bit offended by her reaction. "What? You have to admit, that has got to be one of the cheesiest lines you've ever said." She could not help but fall into heaps of laughter, her trembling frame still clinging to his hips.

Blood rushed to his face as he sulked. When it seemed like her fits of laughter were not ending any time soon, he took action. He bit her earlobe lightly which turned her giggle into a strangled moan.

He fumbled with the button of her shorts as he continued to swirl his tongue around the contours of her ears. Her hands were clutching onto his shoulders, her body shuddering.

As he finally unclasped the button, he gruffly whispered into her thoroughly loved ear, "Just like a freshly cooked mackerel with miso."

She started convulsing for a completely different reason. Half-smothered chuckles buried into his shoulder until they quit abruptly. Pulling back to half-heartedly glare at him, she said, "Wait a second, I would have rather been compared to chocolates than fish! I know that's your favorite but still I am not a damned fish!"

He rolled a shoulder in a half-baked shrug, implying to her that he did not really intend on taking back his statement. To add insult to injury, he then gave her a look of impatience.

"Do you really wanna argue about that right now? When we could be doing something like this?" The sly tone should have warned her. His hands slid down her bottom and pressed her against him.

She huffed indignantly, still not placated. But she could not help the rising desire from spreading warmth to certain places. "You- Take it back!"

"Nope." His lips smacked at the last syllable as his lips twitched in amusement and his dark eyes glinted knowingly.

"Shikamaru," she said warningly as she blatantly gripped his left buttock. Such a nice ass.

He had to bite his lip from smirking, instinctively guessing her thoughts from the pleased glint in her eye.

"Temari," he mimicked her tone as his fingers crept up inside the back of her tank top until it was resting at the clasp of her brassiere. He playfully snapped at it, making light slapping noises. Hmm, lacy.

Her fingers dug deeper into that particularly magnificent anatomy of his. Not disliking this move at all. No, indeed. She struggled to keep the stern look on her face as she demanded, "Take it back or I'll make you beg for it."

A chuckle helplessly escaped him as he shook his head. "Empty threats don't become you, Tem."

"You really think I can't resist you?" she replied in an incredulous tone.

"Not think, I know." He smirked, tracing around her bra strap.

A light growl came from her throat as she suddenly lunged forward and sunk her teeth into the junction between his neck and shoulder.

He let out a surprised yelp. And she would not let go. Until she left deep indents of her teeth.

"Troublesome woman," he muttered as he saw her smirk in satisfaction.

"How about now, lazy?" she taunted him.

She stilled when his thumb came to trace her lips as he replied huskily, "You won't resist, woman. Because I'll willingly say 'I

do'."

A rosy flush overcame her cheekbones. "You don't play fair, damn you."

"All's fair in love and w-" He got cut off when she kissed him gently and passionately. As if he was as delicate as a glass figurine. And he could not help but respond to the plea in her sweet surrender.

He pressed her against the concrete wall as they proceeded to express their love for each other.

A door suddenly slammed open and a squeak sounded. They turned to see Chouji covering his eyes, red-faced.

"I'm sorry to disturb you guys. But the girls' covers have been blown and the guys are drunk. And well it's a mess in there."

Shikamaru heaved a sigh. "It's okay, Chouji. Go on back, we'll follow."

Chouji nodded, dropped his hands then let out another squeak seeing them in the same intimate position. He quickly turned and went back in, still red-faced.

Somehow it ended up that Shikamaru had his hand up the front of her top and Temari had yet to remove her hand from his behind. No wonder Chouji sounded so embarrassed.

"Your best friend is so cute," Temari remarked, amused.

"Yeah, he kinda is," he agreed.

"Makes me wonder how far he and Karui have gone."

"Um, no, I don't wanna think about that."

She pinched his cheeks. "You're cute too."

"Ugh am not."

"Are too."

He kissed her to silence. "So troublesome."

"Are too," she mumbled against his lips.

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After they settled the quarrels that broke out, got home and made love, they laid quietly face to face, his arm flung around her waist, her arm around his neck.

"Tem?"

"Hmm?"

"Let's play shougi and whoever wins receives a favour."

She sighed. "Let's just cut to the chase and tell me what favour I'll

do for you." She eyed him suspiciously.

He grinned at his easy victory. "Perform that lap dance for me again. I couldn't enjoy it fully last time with that stick figure disguise you had."

She snorted loudly then a wicked grin split her face. "Fine, but I'll only allow it on the wedding night. That's if you make it until then."

Gripping her chin so that he got her undivided attention, he said resolutely, "Oh I'll make it. Then you'll regret saying that, soon-to-be wife."

"I don't regret anything I do or say, soon-to-be husband."

"Good. Then I'll be expecting a very entertaining wedding night."

"One would think that the usual wedding night is entertaining enough."

"When has usual ever been enough for us?"

She rolled her eyes but not without a smile at the edge of her lips. "You just better just stay awake, lazy ass."

"With your demands? Plus my kagemane? That would be quite a challenge."

"Who said you were going to use kagemane?"

"You will," he said with a smirk.

Unable to find any arguments for that, she merely said with a smirk of her own, "Well, then, better start saving up some chakra, lazy."

"Troublesome," he sighed but there was a smile playing about his lips.

Unable to resist that smile, she slung her leg over him and rested her body on top of him while giving him a toe-curling kiss. He emitted a soft sound of laughter against her mouth, his hands roaming restlessly about her hips.

Thus started round two.

End
file.